Faculty of Health Sciences 2018 Students’ and Supervisors’
Guide to the NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA)
Applications

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRAs) are intended to stimulate interest in research in the natural sciences and engineering. They are also meant to encourage students to undertake graduate studies and pursue a research career in these fields. They help students to gain research work experience that complements studies in an academic setting. These awards can help provide students with financial support through their host university.

Faculty of Health Sciences USRA WINTER 2018 Internal Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, December 18, 2017</td>
<td>All applications completed online and verified by faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, January 3, 2018</td>
<td>Decisions on successful applicant (2 awards)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, January 6, 2018</td>
<td>Applications submitted online to ROADS by Supervisor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

USRA Application Forms

Checklist for a Complete Application Package:

- Form 202 – Part I (completed by the student)
  - Application Profile
  - Personal Profile
  - Addresses
  - Academic Background
  - Awards
  - Transcript (attachment)

- Form 202 – Part II (completed by the university research supervisor)
  - Project Profile
  - Research Supervisor Profile or Organization Contact Profile
  - Current Employment
  - Address at Location of Tenure
  - Outline of Proposed Research

A complete application for a USRA includes Part I and II of an Application for an Undergraduate Student Research Award (Form 202).

For an application to be submitted to the Faculty of Health Sciences, a completed Faculty of Health Sciences NSERC USRA signature page is also required.

NSERC uses an electronic data capture of the USRA application information. Please ensure that all USRA applications (Part I and Part II of Form 202) are completed using NSERC’s online System, accessed here: https://ebiz.nserc.ca/nserc_web/nserc_login_e.htm

**Hard copies are required for submission to the faculty selection process.**

Form 202 and updated instructions are posted on NSERC’s online System. Supervisors will be asked to verify the application. No hand-written applications will be accepted. Application presentation standards must be followed.
**Form 202 – Part I: Instructions for Student Portion of Application for Internal Competition**

All NSERC applicants have received or will receive, an NSERC PIN. It can be found on any official correspondence received from NSERC. If the applicant has not previously applied to NSERC, or if they cannot remember their PIN, this field can be left blank in the internal application form submitted to HRS.

Once Part I is completed online by the applicant, a reference number will be provided. This number must be forwarded by the student to the proposed university research supervisor to complete Part II.

**Personal Profile**

NSERC asks applicants to provide data regarding their gender, linguistic capability and whether they are disabled or belong to a visible minority. This information is provided on a voluntary basis and is not used during the review process.

Applicants are invited to indicate on a voluntary basis whether they are Aboriginal. This data may be used by NSERC to identify and give awards to Aboriginal applicants whose applications were judged to be meritorious, but could not be recommended due to budget limitations.

**Addresses**

If your current address is temporary, please indicate the leaving date. If there is no leaving date indicated this is the address to which NSERC will send award letters and other correspondence for Industrial USRA.

**If you move after submitting your application, please inform Muriel Gervais by sending an email to gervaism@mcmaster.ca or calling 905-525-9140 extension 21756.**

University USRA correspondence goes through the university Liaison Officer at the host institution (ROADS Office, Gilmour Hall). Students with questions should contact Health Research Services who will then contact ROADS.

**Academic Background**

Include only current and past university programs. Do not include programs that you have not yet started.

**Transcripts (attachment)**

The transcripts must be uploaded and saved into a single PDF file. They must also be scanned as a black and white printed document, and whenever possible, in portrait style. You must include one copy of the legend located on the back side of each transcript. Do not scan the legend multiple times. The purpose of uploading the legend is to help the committee and NSERC understand the grading system at each university.

**USRA**

NSERC may require that official, original documents be provided after the completed application has been submitted to NSERC.

**Industrial USRA**

NSERC requires up-to-date official transcripts to be scanned and uploaded to the application.

**How to Submit Part I**

Once you have completed all the modules, go back to your my Portfolio page and select Verify to ensure that all the required information has been entered. Once the verification is completed, forward the reference number assigned to your application to your proposed university research supervisor. By forwarding your reference number, you are also confirming that, during tenure of the grant/award, you will comply with the terms and conditions of the grant/award.
Form 202 – Part II: Instructions for Supervisor Portion of Application for Internal Competition

This part is to be completed by the proposed research supervisor.

To complete this part,

- Log in to the online system. The process will bring you to the E-Console screen
- University research supervisors should select Forms – Researcher from the list under forms management list.
  - Contact persons at the host organization should select Forms – Partners from the forms management list.
- Select Form 202, Part II, and enter the student’s reference number.
- Complete the required modules.

Project Profile
The title of the proposed research project may be used for publication purposes. It should describe the subject of the research for which you are seeking support. It should not contain a company or trade name. Scientific symbols and acronyms should be spelled out.

Enter the “Research Subject Code” that best describes the proposed area of research. For a complete list of these codes, consult the List of Research Subject Codes for Scholarships and Fellowships.

Research Supervisor Profile
The Personal Identification Number (PIN) is the supervisor’s NSERC PIN. This is mandatory for university research supervisors and the contact person at the host organization.

Current Employment
USRA – Enter your primary place of employment in section I, and if applicable in section II, your position at a Canadian postsecondary institution if it is different from your primary place of employment.
Industrial USRA – Enter your place of employment.

Outline of Proposed Research
Provide a description of the proposed research project for the period during which the award will be held. The proposed research must be related to a field in the natural sciences and/or engineering. Briefly specify the student’s role.

If you are submitting the application for:

- A university applicant, indicate the proposed research supervisor’s active NSERC research grant application number;
- An industry applicant, indicate the name of the contact person at the host organization.

How to Verify and Print the Full Application for the Internal Competition
Once the proposed university supervisor at the host organization has completed all the modules, he/she must go back to the My Portfolio page. Please then select preview and then print the complete application for submission to the faculty committee review.

The proposed university research supervisor must also submit the form to the USRA Liaison Officer at the university by selecting Verify to complete the application and then Submit to LO. If the application was selected for an award further instructions for this stage will be shared with each department administrator in time for the external deadline.

Completed applications from organizations may be submitted to NSERC only by the designated contact person at the organization by selecting Submit to NSERC.

*Intellectual Property (IP) Policy - Please note that NSERC’s Intellectual Property Policy does not apply to this program.*
Signatures

NSERC does not require signatures on applications or other documents submitted electronically using the online system. The electronic submission of applications through its online system represents approval and replaces the traditional “physical” signatures for NSERC. For internal purposes, those submitting to the Faculty of Health Sciences must include a completed Faculty of Health Sciences NSERC USRA signature page.

By signing and submitting the application, the applicant and supervisor:

- Certify that the information provided on my funding applications and related documents is true, complete and accurate and that I have represented myself, my research and my accomplishments in a manner consistent with the norms of the relevant field;
- Consent to the sharing between NSERC and any academic institution to which I am, or may become, affiliated of any and all information, including personal information, in any way related to the application and to the grant/award;
- Understand the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (including the Use and Disclosure of Personal Information Provided to NSERC) as they pertain to grant application information;
- Certify that I am not currently ineligible to apply or and/or hold funds from NSERC, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) or any other research funding organization world-wide for reasons of breach of responsible conduct of research policies such as ethics, integrity or financial management policies;
- Certify that I respect and comply with the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service, as required only if I am, or was in the last 12 months a public servant in the federal government;
- Accept the terms and conditions as set out in NSERC’s Policies and Guidelines and the Award Holder’s Guide;
- Will inform NSERC and institutional officials of changes in eligibility status;
- Agree to comply with the policies and guidelines described in the Requirements for Certain Types of Research, including (research involving humans, research requiring human pluripotent stem cells, research requiring the use of animals, research involving controlled information research involving biohazards, research involving radioactive materials, research activities having potential effects on the environment and other related policies).
- Understand that maintaining public trust in the integrity of researchers is fundamental to building a knowledge-based society. By submitting this application or by accepting funding from CIHR, NSERC and/or SSHRC, I affirm that I have read and agree to respect all the policies of these agencies that are relevant to my research, including the Tri-council Policy Statement; Integrity in research and Scholarship. In cases of a serious breach of agency policy, the agency may publicly disclose my name, the nature of the breach, the institution where I was employed at the time of the breach and the institution where I am currently employed. I accept this as a condition of applying for, or receiving, agency funding and I consent to such a disclosure; and
- Will acknowledge, wherever possible, NSERC’s funding assistance for the research.
Important NSERC USRA Requirements

The following are important eligibility requirements department administrators should keep in mind when answering student and faculty questions regarding USRA Program Regulations. For the full list and details of the regulations governing the USRAs see NSERC’s website in the Program Guide for Students and Fellows at: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp. These regulations must be followed, along with the following guidelines.

Starting in 2016, Updated for Winter 2018 ** Change in Eligibility **

1. Students must have been registered in a Bachelor’s degree at an eligible university in at least one of the 2 terms immediately previous to the award to be eligible to hold a USRA. Previously, candidates must have been registered in a Bachelor’s degree at an eligible university in the term immediately before holding the award.

2. You must work under the supervision of a faculty member who holds an active research grant from NSERC or an eligible research grant from one of the other two granting agencies (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada [SSHRC]), either at the time you submit the application or when you hold the award. Please consult the list of Eligible Supervisors provided on the HRS website. In the past, only current NSERC grant holders were considered eligible to supervise an NSERC USRA trainee. Now, supervisors may be faculty members who hold a CRC, CERC, or specific NCE, in addition to those who hold an NSERC award.

3. Students must not have not held a previous USRA in this fiscal year, or more than 2 previous USRAs in total. This does not include Experience Awards (formerly known as the Industrial USRA).

Duration of the award

NSERC expects universities to make all efforts to give USRAs to qualified students able to hold the awards for 16 consecutive weeks, full-time. Exceptions to this requirement will be made only in truly exceptional cases where the situation is beyond the control of the student, and where the appropriately justified request is received at NSERC before the beginning of the work term. These awards will be prorated.

USRA Objective

The objective of the USRA program is to provide research work experience that complements the degree program in order to encourage students to consider graduate studies and/or a research career. A USRA is intended to be over and above the academic credits needed for the degree, similar to a co-op placement. They may be held concurrently with a co-op placement.

Students should not receive academic credits for the work done during the term of a USRA. Therefore, holders of these awards are not permitted to take courses during working hours throughout the term of their award unless special arrangements to make up the time have been made with the supervisor. In particular, they are not permitted to do thesis research during the term of the award.

Full-time/Part-time Student Status

There is no longer a requirement that students applying for USRAs must be enrolled full-time in their program to be eligible to apply. Universities may add that criterion to their own internal application requirements, if they choose. NSERC expects that most awards will still be held by full-time students.

Sick leave/vacation

The USRA program makes no provision for sick leave or other interruptions of awards. Should a work term be interrupted or terminated early for any reason, universities must inform NSERC immediately, and accurately complete the Confirmation of Payments form. Awards may not be deferred.
Supervisors Regulations

It is also important that Supervisors of USRA holders understand the NSERC USRA Program Requirements regarding the supervision of USRA holders during the award/work period.

Field work

USRA holders must be appropriately supervised during field work. Any additional costs related to field work (e.g., travel expenses) must be covered by the supervisor or the university. The USRA funds are for the student’s personal use.

Working hours of USRA holders

NSERC expects USRA holders to work approximately the same hours on average and have the same working conditions, etc. as other university employees, within the limitations of the type of research they are doing, and in consultation with their supervisor. If staff at the university work 40 hour weeks on average, then the USRA should as well.

Supervisors’ Eligibility

In order to ensure that they obtain research experience in the best possible research environment, students holding USRAs at universities must be supervised by faculty members holding NSERC research grants. The supervisor may be the principal investigator or the co-investigator of the grant. A list of all eligible NSERC grants appears in a supplemental document, available online.

Start and/or end dates of the proposed supervisors’ grants should be checked carefully before the submission of USRA applications to NSERC. Further details appear on the USRA Program Web site under “Where can you hold your award?”

Supervisor’s Rights and Responsibilities

The supervisor has the responsibility to ensure that the student is properly supervised at all times (especially during field work) and appropriately trained in research techniques and safety methods. He/she also has the right to set working hours and assign tasks. Should the student’s performance not match expectations, the supervisor is expected to take appropriate steps to explain matters and retrain the student. If, after a reasonable time period, the student’s performance has not improved, the supervisor may, in consultation with other university administration, decide to terminate the work term. NSERC should be informed.

Co-supervision

NSERC allows USRA students to work under the supervision of two NSERC grantees as long as they work on a “genuine” research project allowing them to be exposed to all aspects of the research process. However, students must not move between laboratories on different projects over the 16-week period, since this would dilute the value of the experience. One NSERC grantee has to be designated as the student’s official supervisor.

Supervision and co-supervision by a non-NSERC grantee is not normally accepted. Small universities may submit requests for exceptions to this rule, in view of their limited number of NSERC grantees. Acceptable arrangements for student supervision and training must be proposed to NSERC for pre-approval, i.e. before applications are sent to NSERC.

Other Program Regulations

There are additional program regulations regarding the spending and reporting of NSERC USRA funds, as well as partnerships and collaboration opportunities that some faculty members or departments may be interested in pursuing.

Please see the following websites for more information on these additional NSERC USRA Regulations:


Travel Allowances: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp#travel_allowances

Rise Canada Program: http://www.risecanada.ca

Shad Valley: http://www.shad.ca/Apply.htm
Frequently Asked Questions

For technical difficulties with the online submission please refer to NSERC’s FAQ [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/FAQ-FAQ_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/FAQ-FAQ_eng.asp).

Regarding USRA Students:

1. **Can a student hold a USRA in the Fall or Winter?**
   
   Yes, however, the total allocation to the Faculty is for the entire 2016/2017 fiscal year. The student and supervisor should complete their application and submit it for the Winter deadline for a decision on the award.

2. **The student wants to take vacation. Is this allowed?**
   
   The student must work for 16 consecutive weeks. If they want to have vacation time, they will need to take this before or after their work period.

3. **What happens if a student accepts the award, but then changes their mind? Can we offer it to another student?**
   
   If the student declines the award before their application is submitted to NSERC, HRS can offer it to another student on the supplementary list. If the application has already been submitted to NSERC, HRS will not be able to offer it to anyone else.

Regarding Supervisors/Supervision of Students:

4. **If the student and supervisor are in different Faculties, who administers the application?**
   
   As the allocation is based upon the number of researchers in a Faculty, the supervisor’s home Faculty will administer the application.

5. **A supervisor’s grant ended in March 2016. Can they host a USRA?**
   
   Please see NSERC’s guidelines below:

   Faculty members whose research grants terminated on March 31, 2016, but who have been given an extension to use up the remaining funds from April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017, are eligible to supervise a USRA student in the summer or fall of 2016 or the winter of 2017.

6. **A supervisor has applied for an NSERC grant that has results due in March/April 2017. Can they supervise a student?**
   
   If they receive a successful result, they are eligible, if they do not receive the award, they are not. As the grant award notification may come out after the internal selection process, there is some risk that the awarded student will not have an eligible supervisor for the work term.

7. **The supervisor does not know their NSERC grant number. Where can they find it?**
   
   The grant number is listed on the award notice from NSERC, their AAN and FAS reports. If the supervisor is still unable to find their file #, please ask them to contact HRS/ROADS. The file number is not the account number or PIN number.

Regarding Administration/Payments/HR

8. **Can I pay more than the minimum $1,884 ‘top up’?**

    Yes, you are free (and encouraged by NSERC) to pay the student more than the minimum stipend.
9. Does the supervisor have to use his/her NSERC account for the top up?
No, the researcher can use a different account for their portion. Indicate this on the spreadsheet supplied when selected.

10. Can the Department or Faculty contribute funds to the student salaries?
Yes, there is no maximum payment.

11. Will the student receive a tax slip?
Questions about deductions should be submitted to your area’s payroll contact.

12. How do we process the pay documents for the students?
Your area HR representative will be able to provide you with this information. Students should be set up as they would normally be for a position in your department and the forms sent to Research Finance for approval. Once approved, the forms will be sent to HR by Research Finance.

13. What if a USRA applicant is rejected for funding by NSERC?
Students will have to start work on their USRA before the award can be confirmed by NSERC. You must be prepared to continue to employ any students whose applications may be rejected by NSERC.